

MICHAEL CAINE escaped poverty to become a leading actor of his generation, but he's anything but a miser.

It's ironic, Caine says, that he plays Scrooge in *The Muppet Christmas Carol*, a new film version of Charles Dickens' classic.

Caine despises the class system of his native England and is known for splashing his substantial wealth around. It's an attitude, he says, that results from battling financial hardship for nearly 30 years.

Caine owns five restaurants and has homes in England, France and the U.S. He is still attracting multi-million dollar acting salaries and is reaping major rewards from the release of his top-selling autobiography, *What's It All About?*

But it wasn't always so. Caine didn't get his first big pay cheque until after filming *The Ipcress File* in 1965, and while still loathe to discuss his generosity, that's when he began helping his family.

Caine's father, a fish market porter and heavy gambler, never lived to enjoy his son's fortune, but the actor ordered his mother, a cleaner, to give up work and bought her a house — the first real asset she ever owned.

Caine's mother died in 1989, but it wasn't until last year

*With Kermit, Miss Piggy and the rest of the Muppets around for Christmas, Michael Caine is*

# HAVING A DICKENS OF

that he learned she had a secret — an illegitimate son, Caine's half-brother David.

Caine was in the U.S. filming *Noises Off* when a newspaper reporter told him about David.

David was born in 1924 with epilepsy, which at the time was regarded as a form of insanity. When he reached adulthood, David was put in a home for the insane, where he spent most of his life.

Caine was stunned by the story and immediately paid to have

David shifted to a quiet country home. When the two finally met, Caine discovered that his half-brother was confined to a wheelchair and unable to speak.

"It seems that every time he had an epileptic fit (in his younger years) he would bang his head continuously on a stone floor," Caine says. "Eventually, this gave him brain damage."

"David died last February and the amazing thing is that my mother visited him almost every

Monday for 67 years without any of the family knowing. She had made the nurses at the hospital swear to keep it secret because she felt it would hurt my career if David's existence became known."

Caine, who won an Oscar for his role in *Hannah And Her Sisters*, says his half-brother caused him to re-evaluate his life.

But he has never felt inclined to reduce his acting workload.

"In England, we have this perception that movies are a frivolous







absolutely seriously, otherwise it would flop.

"The Muppets are the greatest scene-stealers in the world and the only thing I had in my favor that they didn't was reality.

"I played my reality against their insanity and treated the script as if I were doing it for the Royal Shakespeare Company.

***“We have this perception that movies are a frivolous thing where a load of sissies put make-up on and run around making fools of themselves”***

"It was an extraordinarily difficult role and I'm very proud of my work in the picture."

Caine, who recently toured Australia to promote his autobiography, plans to return within 12 months to work on a new film.

A script being considered is based on the Fine Cotton horseracing ring-in scam.

The Muppet movie opens nationally on December 11.

Darren Devlyn

# A TIME!

thing where a load of sissies put make-up on and run around making fools of themselves," he says.

It follows that many were shocked when they learnt Caine would co-star with Kermit in The Muppet Christmas Carol.

Caine, however, viewed the role as an immense challenge.

"As an actor, Scrooge stretches me ... there's no doubt about that," he insists.

"I realised that if I were going to play Scrooge then I had to play it

● Michael Caine as Scrooge with Kermit and, above, with the whole Muppet team in the movie The Muppet Christmas Carol, based on the Dickens classic ... "It was an extraordinarily difficult role."

